



U.S. Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting Activities in Eastern Europe

Official Meeting of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public
Diplomacy

Thursday, February 26, 2015

10:00a.m.-12:00p.m.

American Foreign Service Association, Washington, D.C.

GUEST SPEAKER PRESENT:

Mr. Macon Phillips, Coordinator of the International Information Programs Bureau at the U.S. Department of State

Mr. Mark Toner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the U.S. Department of State

Mr. Jeffrey Trimble, Deputy Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau at the Broadcasting Board of Governors

COMMISSION MEMBERS PRESENT:

Mr. William J. Hybl, Chair

Mr. Sim Farar, Vice Chair

Mr. Lyndon Olson, Vice Chair

Anne Terman Wedner

COMMISSION STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT:

Ms. Michelle Bowen, Program Support Assistant

Dr. Katherine Brown, Executive Director

Chris Hensman, Senior Advisor

MINUTES:

The U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy held a public meeting on February 26, 2015 from 10:00-11:30 a.m. at the American Foreign Service Association in Washington, DC. The meeting was focused on U.S. public diplomacy and international broadcasting activities in Eastern Europe. The Commission Members first welcomed Mr. Mark Toner, Deputy Assistant Secretary for Public Diplomacy in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs at the State Department, who gave an overview of U.S. foreign policy goals in the region and how public diplomacy tools support them. Mr. Macon Phillips, the Coordinator of the International Information Programs Bureau at the State Department, then spoke about the platforms, programs and content the bureau has produced to support the U.S. embassy in Ukraine, in addition to others in the region. Finally, Jeffrey Trimble, the Deputy Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau at the Broadcasting Board of Governors, discussed U.S. broadcasting activities in Eastern Europe and the challenge of countering Russian disinformation.

The Commission Members, experts in attendance, and the audience posed questions about the structural issues that impede effective U.S. public diplomacy and broadcasting in the region. The specific questions and their answers can be found below in the transcript. The meeting closed by briefly discussing the Commission's mandate and plan for the remainder of the 2015 fiscal year. The Commission will meet publicly again in Washington on May 5, 2015.

TRANSCRIPT:

William J. Hybl: Good morning. On behalf of the U.S. Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy, I welcome all of you. I'm Bill Hybl. And, I think that you'll have a chance to meet some of our Commissioners today. Since 1948, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy has been charged to appraise U.S. government activities, which are intended to understand, inform and influence foreign publics. It also works to increase the understanding and support of many of these same activities. The Commission, as many of you know, conducts research symposiums, and makes assessments, and informs discussions in the area.

This meeting is going to focus on public diplomacy and international broadcasting programs in Eastern Europe with a special emphasis on the Ukraine. We will hear from two officials from the State Department who are responsible for public diplomacy efforts that support U.S. foreign policy in the region, Mark Toner and Macon Phillips. We'll also hear from an official who helps to oversee the international broadcasting efforts via Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty.

Before we go to our speakers though, I would like to introduce the Commission Members who are with us today. Sin Farar, our Vice Chairman from Los Angeles; Ambassador Lyndon Olson, our Vice Chairman from Waco, Texas; and Anne Terman Wedner from Chicago, Illinois. Two of our Commissioners were unable to make it today. But in the back, you'll find biographies for all of us.

We're proud to announce that the next two public meetings of the Commission, will be on May 5th and September 22nd. In September, we'll be releasing our second ever-Comprehensive Annual Report on Public Diplomacy and International Broadcasting Activities. For those of you who read the report last fall, it really was a compendium of what is going on in public diplomacy around the world.

We also want to acknowledge Ambassador Larry Wohlers, who is here today. Larry is the former ambassador to the Central African Republic, and a former Public Affairs Officer at the U.S. Embassy in Moscow. That's just a couple of the things he's done. And we're thrilled that Larry, who's now affiliated with the Meridian International Center, will be working with us over the next couple of months to update the Advisory Commission's 2008 report, *Getting the People Part Right*, which looks at how PD officers are selected, trained, and how they advance within the State Department. Ambassador Wohler's, welcome and thank you for joining our team even though it's for a short amount of time.

I'd like to welcome Vice Chair Si, Farar. But before I do, I want to thank Katherine Brown and the staff. They do an extraordinary job. Only one of us lives in the District of Columbia area. And on an ongoing basis, they keep us informed. They do great work. And Chris Hensman, where are you? There you are. I'll tell you, you and the entire staff truly make a difference for this great nation. Sim?

Sim Farar: Well, thank you very much, Commissioner Hybl. I just flew in from Los Angeles, California from 78-degree warm weather. I'm not quite used to this snow.

We're honored today with three speakers who look at this issue from the United States public diplomacy and international broadcasting vantage points. First, we welcome Mark Toner. Mark is currently a Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of European and Eurasian Affairs of the State Department. He is a career Foreign Service Officer who has served overseas in West Africa and Europe. Among his many assignments include being an Information Officer in Dakar, Senegal, the Public Affairs Officer in Krakow, Poland, and a Spokesman for the U.S. Mission to NATO. Prior to joining the State Department, Mark was a Peace Corp volunteer in Libya and Liberia in West Africa. Welcome Mark.

Second, we welcome Macon Phillips. Macon is currently the Coordinator of the Bureau of International Information Programs at the State Department. His first role in the Obama Administration was at the White House as a Special Assistant to the President and Director of Digital Strategy. Previously, he ran the new media program for the presidential transition team and served as the Deputy Director of the Obama campaign's new media department. Prior to the campaign, Mr. Phillips led Blue State Digital's strategy practice, working with clients like the Democratic National Committee, Senator Ted Kennedy. He is a proud AmeriCorps alum, a Huntsville, Alabama native and a graduate of Duke University. Welcome, Macon.

We also welcome Jeffrey Trimble. Jeffrey is the Deputy Director of the International Broadcasting Bureau at the Broadcasting Board of Governors, where he works with the global strategy team, which focuses on special projects that advance collaboration and coordination across the BBG. Jeffrey joined the BBG in 2007 as a Director of Programming and later served as its Executive Director, managing the board, staff and providing strategic guidance and program oversight. He became IBB Deputy Director in 2012. Trimble also worked for 10 years at Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, where his positions included acting President, Director of Policy and Strategic Planning and Director of Broadcasting. Previously, Jeffrey worked at US News and World Report Magazine for over 15 years.

After we hear from our three speakers we will turn to questions from the Commission Members and then the audience. First, we'll hear from Mr. Toner.

Please welcome Mark Toner.

[Applause]

Mark Toner: Thanks everybody. Can everyone hear okay? Great. Good. Thanks. And thank you for the kind introduction, Sim. Prior to my current job, I was the acting spokesman and deputy spokesman for the State Department. I worked with Toria Nuland there. And that was really a crash course in tactical day-to-day communications, a little too much frankly some days. But thank you for the invite to be here. This is a good opportunity and I really appreciate all of you who made it through the snowy morning. I know what it's like to juggle closed schools with the kids and various schedules. So I appreciate seeing you all.

When I prepared my comments this morning – and I will I swear try to keep it very quick – I realized there's a lot to be said and a lot of aspects to cover. We're facing a daunting challenge. I'll

start that way. We need to be careful to distinguish Russia's leadership from the Russian people. But Russia's leadership is intent on controlling and disrupting the free flow of information across Europe. And beyond Europe, I would say just they're trying to distort the truth to justify their actions. Dissatisfaction among Russian speaking minorities along the periphery dissuades sovereign nations from pursuing a path toward greater political and economic engagement with the West. Obviously, the most explicit example of that is Ukraine, but it's also elsewhere. Ultimately, the objective is to drive a wedge between the U.S. and its closest partners in Europe. It is a sophisticated effort. It is well resourced, as we all know. And it is aggressive. I would add even that it is audacious in its scope and its ambition.

So our efforts to combat this behemoth are organized around three objectives that aim to reestablish our voice within this contested information space and to counter Kremlin disinformation with true and credible information. So this is not propaganda versus propaganda. And that's an important distinction to draw. And I think also we want to create a positive narrative of what democracy and western values truly represent and why countries like Ukraine have a right to pursue those ideas. So the first line of effort is quite simply, how do we build and empower a network of journalists and other third party validators across the entire region? And by region, I mean Eastern Europe, or Russia's periphery. These virtual networks, if you will, can provide a strong, independent voice of credible information for the populations in that region. And we want to give them the tools, the training, the expertise, the resources, to do just that, to do everything from target emails that provide real time information to them about what's going on and what our foreign policy is trying to do. And by "our," I mean both the United States and, frankly, Western Europe. We also want to conduct other different online engagements and have been doing web chats, online training, collaboration. We've also begun giving out small grants to fund innovative ideas.

There are many Russian-speaking journalists and dissidents in that periphery. We need to harness the power of their voices and give them the tools to be able to speak out against what's happening along the periphery and within Russia. We're also upgrading, Macon can speak very well to this, and resourcing our American spaces in key locations such as Chisinau and of course Kyiv so that we can draw in audiences who want to access more information about America and frankly, American values and ideas.

What are some of the ways we're doing this? We had a Tech Camp in Prague in November where we pulled together Russian-speaking journalists from the Baltics on down to Ukraine. Some of the stories were remarkable, correspondents in Ukraine with little training who were out there risking their lives day-to-day with no protection. So it was really inspiring to meet and to talk to these people. And as I said, our role in this was bringing them together so that they can sit and talk with each other and share ideas, and then trying to guide those ideas. We brought in experts, including Jeff Trimble sitting next to me, to try to tell what's out there in terms of resources and how we can help them do their jobs better.

We need to find ways to engage Russians through exchange programs, including FLEX and other programs, despite continued pressure on our implementing partners. This is how we reach the next generation of Russians as well as those along the periphery. All of you know in this room that Russia shut down the FLEX Youth Exchange program this year, which was very unfortunate for Russia and for young Russians who wanted to take part in the program. It was a windfall, of course, for many of the other countries along the periphery where we were able to give them extra slots. But it begs the question, why did they do it? What did they have to fear about this pretty benign program?

Another question is, how do we reach larger Russian speaking audiences with the BBG and through additional programming? Of course, Jeff will speak to this. And how do we provide more content? And that is a constant refrain that we've heard from journalists, broadcasters, communicators in the field. They oftentimes have Russian language TV stations but frankly their own stations have been underfunded for years and they can't compete against sophisticated entertainment coming in from Russia. We all know this. It's not your mother and father's Soviet broadcast from yesteryear, black and white apparatus type stuff. This is very sophisticated. The entertainment value alone is quite good. And so what we hear constantly is that unless you're able to compete at that level, don't even try. And so that's a challenge to think about. And Jeff can speak to it more eloquently than I can, but it is a huge challenge because it's not that easy to do.

The other element of this and, of course, Jeff will speak to this--sorry, Jeff. I'm putting a lot on your shoulders here – is the 30-minute news show Current Time, which is really BBG's effort to respond. And again, these are small steps but big undertakings in a sense because it's hard to produce a 30-minute daily broadcast in Russian and have it be good.

We're also looking at content sharing platforms. And I'll let Jeff speak to that via BBG direct. The idea is that these platforms can allow independent media outlets along Russia's periphery to access and to share their own content that will help them compete against this slicker, better resourced Russian media. It's certainly an uphill fight. We recognize that. But again, I think we need to play a leadership and a convening role in all of this. But we also need to empower those voices because ultimately we think it's in that independent sphere that this battle is going to be won or lost.

We also have the Russian information team, which gives us the real time capacity to push back in Russian social media via messaging content and social media without getting too much in the weeds. In the very early days after Crimea we realized we really had no effective Russian language voice and social media to push back against so much of the disinformation from Moscow and the Kremlin. We, as I like to say, duct tape something together in a couple of days. And that's unfair because it was really an extraordinary group of people, Russian speakers, and others. We rely heavily on IIP on completing the analysis, graphic support and content production to really put something together that was able to counter the disinformation. The idea behind this entity was—it wasn't affiliated with our embassy in Moscow – to create products marked as the US State Department and the US government. But we wanted to hit hard when we saw disinformation and point out some of the lies. That has morphed along the way and we can talk about that offline or after, or Macon can speak to it as well.

The other thing we've been trying to do is get more US government voices engaged both in periphery media but also within Russia. And let me preface that by saying that the Russian media space is virtually impenetrable for independent voices right now. With that said, we can't let that keep us from trying. We have done some pretty innovative things. We've created a community of practice among our Russian-speaking embassies so that they can share material and real time Russian translations. When the Secretary [of State] speaks on the Hill, we can translate it into the Russian language and release it so they can share it with their contacts almost immediately. We've done training for a cadre of Russian qualified spokespeople. We've given them intensive media training on how to get out there and do interviews in Russian in broadcast media, which is tough. We've done it already in Urdu and in Arabic, and pretty effectively as well. And the idea is that we want to empower these folks to get out there. And it's not just about the Ukraine. And it's not just about what Russia is doing in its periphery. We want our people to be able to talk about Ebola, to be

able to talk about ISIL, to be able to talk about the range of challenges that we're trying to deal with around the world. Because another thing we've seen is how the media in Russia can distort some of those efforts and create a false perception.

We're also coordinating closely with our partners in Europe: the EU, NATO, and the UK especially, Poland, and the Baltics. These are forward-leaning governments who want to be out there messaging more on Ukraine and on Russia. And we've created a Friends of Ukraine group. We share content. We share strategies. We share messaging. We're actually meeting in Vilnius in a couple of weeks. And it's still a pretty decent operation, but the idea here is that we can react more quickly and more cohesively to breaking events. But also in the long-term, we can look at who's doing what, for example, to support NGOs or independent media in Ukraine, and how we manage our resources.

And then finally, regarding commercial media strategy, the BBG is doing a great job. But how do we harness Hollywood? How do we harness Silicon Valley? How do we better do that? And frankly, we need to do more on that sphere. We are the best in the world on this. We, not the US State Department, but the United States. We are not controlling but putting out great content, cutting edge stuff. And frankly, we need to appeal to those bright people and creative minds and get them to engage on this front.

And finally, the last thing is helping the Ukraine get its message out partly with Ukrainian NGOs, trying to build a capacity within the Ukrainian government. This is a country in transition. And like many countries in transition, there's a gap. And so you've got a generation of communicators within the Ukrainian government who aren't up to speed on modern media, on how to engage, on how to tell this story. What is really inspiring is to see how young Ukrainians from civil society and from the PR world are doing. There are Ukrainians who were successful in the private sector but are now taking that skill set and trying to help the government tell its story better. The Ukrainian Crisis Media Center is one example of that. And it's truly inspiring to see how they really sacrificed their own lives and their own jobs and whatnot to support the government in this time of transition.

We're doing on demand exchange programs and in-country training. We're trying to support Ukraine's independent media as well with training tools and networking. We want to try to help them get their story out to all areas of the Ukraine and that includes the eastern part of Ukraine that is under a barrage of Russian media disinformation. So to do this right we need to resource it right.

As I said, we were lucky last year to have the windfall of Flex Youth Exchange spots for many of the Russian periphery countries. This is about as pure an exchange program as you can have. There's no secret indoctrination sessions in Washington. Kids come over. They go to high schools in the United States. They live in American families. It's hugely successful, hugely popular, and its life changing for many of its participants.

I talked a little bit about entrepreneurship. We're trying to start that up across Europe but we really want to focus on the Russian periphery countries. We want to engage with young people. And we're trying to get that up and running in the next few months. But the important takeaway here is that especially within Russia. We're poised to start a new chapter with Russia. We don't want to have a generation of Russians who their only perception of America has been defined through the distorted lens of Russian media.

Quickly, because I know I've gone on too long, we need more digital and social media talent in our embassies across Europe so we can be more nimble in today's fast moving messaging environment. And we also need to do more, better, faster exchange programs. We need to build that long-term relationship as I just said. The important thing, and I'll leave you with this, is that it's the US and the West that have the positive message here to tell. And it's Ukraine that has the positive message to tell. Too often in the last year or so we've spent our time reacting to the lies that Moscow generates on a daily or even hourly basis to raise doubt and muddy the information waters. But fundamentally this isn't about a new Cold War. It's not about some great game between super powers. Basically this comes down to countries, but especially I'm talking about Ukraine here, that are struggling to join Europe's free political structure and liberal economy and build a better future for its people. And that often gets lost in all of the give and take, and frankly the violence. And they're trying to do this in the face of outright aggression on the part of its larger, more powerful neighbor. So our efforts must always be geared towards keeping that fact from the center. And I will shut up now and hand it over to Macon.

Sim Farar: Thank you very much, Mark. Now we can move to Macon.

Macon Phillips: Great. Thank you. And before I even dive in let me say that I just got a note that I have to leave at 11:00. So if I have to leave before the questions, I just want you to know my email address is macon@state.gov. And you can feel free to come to me with ideas or questions because I'm very excited to be here today. I also want to start by talking about Africa and not about Russia if you'll just indulge me for one minute. The last time I was invited to speak to the Commission I was invited to brief about the YALI network, which was a virtual network we're setting up around the Young African Leaders Initiative that was bringing a lot of fellows to Washington, D.C. And the gist of it was that we had built a 40,000-person virtual network across the continent. That network's grown to about a 130,000 young leaders. And we are working with our colleagues in the Africa Bureau and with a number of other partners to talk to them about various priorities, including the 20 elections that we have coming up on that continent in the next two years. It's a growing asset for the department and I felt like it was important to note that and give more information about it.

So my name is Macon Phillips, as mentioned earlier. I joined the State Department a year and a half ago. I'm the Coordinator of the Bureau of International Information Programs, which is as many of you know, part of the public diplomacy family. When I took on this bureau and joined the team there, we realized that we needed to pivot to bring our bureau more aligned with our foreign policy priorities. Historically, we've been focused on telling America's story and general information for publics about the United States. And we still do that. But as you'll hear from Jeff, as you've already heard from Mark, as you know just from turning on the television, information is as much a predicate for foreign policy success as it is like a chronicle of foreign policy success. And we need to figure out how we can use information as a tool. And that's really where IIP is hoping to provide value along with Public Affairs, Educational and Cultural Affairs, and a number of other office at the State Department.

What that means, long story short, is that we really focus on three competencies for our bureau. First is providing a platform for public diplomacy, places where we engage the public. And that includes our digital places, and our real brick and mortar places. These are websites. These are social media presences. These are American spaces, which are ever more important as our physical embassies become more and more isolated and secure. We have to figure out how we can provide real world venues for American spaces. And I'll touch on that in a second.

The second is our content, which is taking on a digital first strategy but not a digital only strategy. We're trying to figure out how we can provide information to the public about the United States, about our policy priorities in a 21st century way, in a holistic way. That really breaks into two categories. The first is content, editorial content. We create our videos, our graphics, our written text; things that people are paid by the US government create. The other category, which is a very exciting category, includes our speakers. Americans who are sent out with no agenda other than to tell the truth and represent their viewpoints on the taxpayers' dime and we can use those quite strategically as we have, as many of you know. That's our content area.

In our final area are programs, which is really the synthesis of these assets into projects. And some of those projects are campaigns. Some are the YALI network that we've created working with the Africa bureau. Some of them are just responses to posts, who call us every day, to make sure they're getting what they need. And then the final office within that program's group, and this was mentioned in the Commission report, is our Office of Analytics because we don't do a good enough job understanding if something's working both as an evaluation but also real time analytics. The Analytics Office helps us understand what's happening around the world. So that's IIP. And I wanted to give you that overview just so you understand how we're approaching our work vis-à-vis Ukraine, vis-à-vis the Kremlin and so forth. And we'll talk about it in three categories. First, to pick up where Mark left off we'll talk about Ukraine. Second, we'll talk about building and supporting an alliance that's united for Ukraine. Third, to address disinformation, which as an alum of the Obama campaign, I'm very familiar with.

I wanted to start with Ukraine because to me, having been out here as Jeff and Mark have, and many of you probably, the success of the Ukrainian democracy is the principle way of solving the problem. The hard work of the government there proceeds as un-federate as it can and results in a representative democracy despite all the head wind that's being thrown at it. And to that end, the State Department's doing a whole laundry list of things. But I wanted to focus on the American Space in Kiev that Mark noted. Some of you may be familiar with the old U.S. consulate building in downtown Kiev. You may also be familiar with our move to put embassies 45 minutes outside the city center. We're taking this consulate and have stripped it down to create a totally new building, inside and out with the Smithsonian Institution. I just went out there and I sent a team of 14 people out there, including the Smithsonian experts, to design the kind of experience that can be a real world platform for public engagement.

Now we can invest a lot of money in this space. I think, compared to other spaces, we probably will. But that won't get the job done. We're also working with the Ambassador and the team there to make sure we have a whole program of public engagement at this space. But it's not just PD officers going there to work with young kids to teach them English. We're actually looking at every part of our mission there to figure out how they can use this space to get our policy goals achieved. And I look forward to updating you on the progress there. We're very excited to get that online in the spring. And just one piece now, we're taking maybe a little less of an aggressive model, but certainly investing in refurbishment of the American space in Chişinău, across the street from Moldova State University, a great location. And we are focusing on that as a platform for virtual engagement, building out a studio to receive virtual programs in a really excellent way so it's not just a laptop with a camera up top but actually a platform, a windows-backed program you can buy here in the United States.

The second thing we're doing just focused on Ukraine is working the Public Affairs Section there to keep doing the kind of work they would be doing if things weren't happening in eastern Ukraine,

such as focusing on academic integrity and anti-corruption efforts. We have a number of programs that we're focusing on that aren't just about the Kremlin, that aren't just about soldiers in eastern Ukraine, that aren't just about Crimea. We have to make sure we keep our eyes on the ongoing work. And then finally, supporting the embassy, supporting one of our most forward leaning Ambassadors on social media, Ambassador Pyatt, and making sure that they have the content, the support, the analytics that they need to keep doing their job on a day-to-day, hour-to-hour basis. And I'm sure you're all tracking that. But it's a very excellent, excellent job that that embassy has been doing. So that's the Ukraine in brief.

The second is how we're supporting and informing an alliance that's united for Ukraine. As Mark mentioned, after Russia invaded Crimea, which by the way happened on my boss's first week, which is really kind of useful to add to the chaos. We all sat around and said we have to do something. We have to look at what we're already doing but figure out what else we can do. And we literally found a room in our bureau, took ten people, two of them are here. And we threw them in a room and said just figure something out, start working on something. It's got to be in the Russian language. We need to be addressing some of the disinformation that's out there. We need to be making sure people are aware of what's happening right now. And from that we started iterating and ended up with fairly effective online program in Russian that we were able to assess what was getting picked up in the geographic areas we care about. Those are actually being shared into other networks. Our properties were growing. We felt like this was a moderate success in terms of getting that message out.

But as we've moved forward it's become clearer that expanding this work into the English language is an obvious need. There's a number of organizations out there trying to get their perspectives out. But in terms of the United States and its perspective on what's happening in the Ukraine, the chief source of this has been Ambassador Pyatt and his team making sure the situation in the Ukraine gets out. But as we have efforts like the Europe Bureau's effort with Friends of Ukraine, we have a lot of similar work that's happening in South and Central Asia, like in Kazakhstan and other countries that really do care a lot about this issue. It's imperative that we have an English language channel for organizing non-USG actors to support the Ukraine and its development as a democracy. So we're working on that right now. We've had some English language that's come out through these channels but I think taking a step back and looking at not just how we brand our social properties but how we look more holistically beyond just Twitter or Facebook, to actually think about our speakers programs and tailored exchange programs. This is our whole of State Department approach to how we can help support this alliance.

And then the final piece is disinformation. And I think it's important to talk about disinformation and not just the Kremlin. Disinformation is not new. Disinformation is a trend that's being used by a lot of different organizations over time. We're seeing, I think, the impact of the Kremlin's skill at disinformation right now. But suffice to say it's a problem that can be found in Iraq. It's a problem that can be found in Africa. There's disinformation that the United States funded Ebola. There's all sorts of problems and wherever the source is the audiences are the ones we need to be thinking about. So there was a great paper I recommend you read written by Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss. And one of the things they talked about was the USIA's Active Measures Working Group. It turns out I got a lot of USIA folks that still work for IIP. And there's a lot of folks who want to look at what worked with that and what's changed obviously in some of the years. And so we are. We've brought some members of that team together into a new team. We're bringing in social media experts and others to reconstitute a group that focuses on disinformation, not Ukraine.

Because one of the takeaways from that paper for me was that the Kremlin's goal with their disinformation is just to make us all think it's all PR, and that could be anything. And so we replied to disinformation in kind. We tried to swat down every lie that's out there and that's simply our strategy. We fall into their trap. Counter-messaging can be at times implementing the other person's strategy. So we're going to keep doing that. We're not going to give up on that fight. But we have to do a lot more. We have to document the systems of disinformation. We have to be smart about that. We have to build capacity over the edge and empower our PD officers in the field to really be aggressive and knock this stuff down. That's what we're doing. This unit is going to build on a lot of work that's already happening.

The final thing I just wanted to say is this all sounds to me at least well and good and certainly not the entire overview of what we're doing, but its things that IIP is involved in. But we need help with this. And I think coming over here I didn't want to miss this opportunity just to ask for help with really two things. The first is helping us understand evaluation and analytics. This is a commitment that we have to improve. There's a tendency just to want to do a lot of stuff, put it all out there and make sure you're accounting the world. But RT has a huge budget and they aren't constrained by the truth. So they just blast out a lot of stuff. But you better believe they're thinking about people they want to reach. And similarly, we need to be thinking about the specific audiences that we care about the most and that's certainly a conversation that's ongoing within the State Department that many of you have experienced in Europe, in other areas to help us understand who are the canaries of the coalmine? How do we carve up an audience to really understand how to tailor our projects and actually evaluate whether we're reaching them? That is probably the single biggest area that I could use help on. I'm very, very comfortable in understanding the presidential primaries. I can talk to you about battleground states and understanding audience segmentation there. But when I turn around and look at the rest of the world, we do need to think in a much more tailored and specific way about audiences. And that is an area we could use a lot of help. But we'll certainly keep you posted on this.

I appreciate the opportunity to give you an overview of what we're working and I'll hand it off to Jeff.

Sim Farar: Thank you, Macon. Last but not least, of course, Jeffrey.

Jeffrey Trimble: I think I'll actually pull the mic up because my colleague Anastasia here is going to show a couple of quick visuals to reinforce points that we're going to make. She'll stand over here to the side.

[Crosstalk]

Jeffrey Trimble: No, but you will have to crane your necks if you don't mind to watch these couple quick visuals that we're going to show you. They aren't long.

While we're rearranging, just let me say thanks again to the Commission for this opportunity. And it's good to share this space as well with Macon and Mark, with whom we at U.S. International Broadcasting work closely. But I want to emphasize we do that with all respect for the journalistic firewall that exists around the broadcasters of US International Broadcasting. I'll scale back a little bit on some of the things I was going to say about Russian propaganda because I think Macon and Mark have spoken very ably to this. But I would just say by way of lead in, that throughout the history of US international media starting back in 1942 with VOA's first broadcast – which we're

going to remind you were in Germany, by the way – we’ve operated on a model of free dialogue as key to a liberal vision of globalization. The idea was that more information means less misunderstanding, means less tension, means more harmony. People who are given access to information would use it to make good choices. The more frequent information we have, the greater the debate and the greater the common good.

But what if, as Macon in particular has suggested, a player uses freedom of information to subvert its principles to make debate and critical thinking impossible, not to inform or persuade but as a weapon? This is Moscow’s propaganda playbook. And it’s a formidable challenge but I think it’s one to which we’re rising.

I’m going to show you in the next slide here something that some of you may find offensive. And I apologize in advance for that, but I will point out that this clip aired on Rossiya 1, which in a typical week is viewed by 75 percent of urban Russians. And I’m showing it to you because while you might have seen RT, I think there might not be a general understanding of just how profound and pernicious the propaganda that the Russian public itself is being shown by its television stations. So this clip is from a recent addition of a program called “Special Correspondent” on Rossiya 1. The program is a documentary broadly on the subject of moral decay in the west, but it included specific allegations that western society is indoctrinating its children with homosexual propaganda. As proof of this point, the program includes this scene allegedly from a typical family home in America.

[Video 00:41:27 – 00:41:39]

So I’m suggesting that might be the first time the Commission’s had an opportunity to watch gay porn during one of its sessions.

[Laughter]

Jeffrey Trimble: Following this video, the documentary posts acts in disgust. Is it appropriate for a child’s bedroom to look this way? Well, the video is a fake. And I’d just like to ask out of curiosity, does anyone know what the real ad is here because I’m about to show it. Yeah. Okay. Here’s the real ad. Here’s just what this thing actually was.

[Video 00:42:10 – 00:42:35]

Jeffrey Trimble: So yes. It’s an ad for Fathead. I heard someone; at least a couple of people have seen this ad. It’s a sports paraphernalia company that includes among its products these cool, giant photo decals, the monster trucks that you put up on your wall. The Russians didn’t even actually produce this fake. The fake was done in an online forum called 4Chan just for fun as a kind of a parody. I don’t know whether the Russians knew that this was a fake and they used it as such, or whether they were not actually aware of that. But the point is that they used it in deadly earnest.

The message here is that the West is seriously morally corrupt. There’s a perilous clash of civilizations between Russia and the West. Only the Russian state stands for and protects strong traditional family values. These are carefully designed political tactics to foster fear and hatred of the West and a subsequent nationalist loyalty to Vladimir Putin’s government. I’ll remind as well that Putin, since the Russian economy began declining, has increasingly faced his rule, his regime, on nationalism at home by cultivating the idea that he’s protecting strong Russian values from a decadent and corrupt west.

So again, I wanted just to show that to give you an idea of just how profound and how pernicious these efforts are back home in Russia. As I said, you might be familiar already, of course, with the kinds of things that our team does. So I see we're having a problem getting this next slide backup but we're going to talk a little bit about propaganda just again quickly because I think the guys have covered it well.

Russian propaganda today shares some features from earlier times but in important ways it's very different and it represents and reflects today's fast moving media world. So the Kremlin's used and used the principles of liberal democracies against them and to create tools to confuse, blackmail, demoralize, subvert, and paralyze. And I'd like to add my pitch as well. And Macon mentioned this paper by Peter Pomerantsev and Michael Weiss. It's called the Menace of Unreality, How the Kremlin Weaponizes Information, Culture, and Money. And I highly recommend that paper. I'd be happy to provide a link to that or follow-up information for those of you who have not had an opportunity. And Commissioners, I particularly recommend this to you.

So the Kremlin exploits freedom of information to inject disinformation. It's increasing its information of war budget. I'm not going to get into the figures because we'll get into this numbers game about who spends how much money on what. But the Kremlin is very able in resourcing its efforts. Finally, and this is a point that Pomerantsev and Weiss make, the Kremlin, unlike the Cold War when the Soviets, for ideological reasons, had to largely support leftist groups and causes. The Kremlin today uses what Weiss and Pomerantsev call a liquid approach to ideology that allows the Kremlin to simultaneously back far left, far right movements, greens, anti-globalist, financial elites, with the aim again being to exacerbate, divide, and create an echo chamber of Kremlin support.

The Kremlin's actually proud of this stuff. They don't even try to hide it. When a sensational bit that had been aired on Russian television of Ukrainian forces allegedly crucifying a child in Ukraine was exposed to be a complete fabrication, Russia's deputy minister for communications Alexei Volland [ph] was challenged on this in a press conference and showed no embarrassment of any kind. He said in fact, what matters is ratings and that viewership of the leading Russian TV channels had increased by almost half in the previous two months thanks to this kind of coverage. This about sums it up. I kicked in a quote here from Dmitry Kiselyov, who is the Kremlin's propaganda master, about just exactly what it is that they're trying to do.

I think we can jump right ahead here and I'll just say a couple of quick words about the Kremlin's main media outlets. So RUSSIA-24 is an international news information station. It's kind of a CNN model. Its content is so pernicious that it's been banned in Ukraine and Moldova and may be banned in other countries as well. RUSSIA-1, we've already discussed, is one of the big Russian national channels. These two channels have wide distribution in the former Soviet space through cable and satellite television and reach the Russian speakers there. RT—I think most of you know about RT sufficiently that I won't really spend time talking about it now. I did follow with interest, however, their coverage. And Anastasia helped to point this out in the Secretary's remarks yesterday that shows just the way that they distort the information. So the Secretary had said—let me see if I can just grab quickly something here about propaganda efforts and money. So Secretary Kerry said Russia Today can be heard in English. Do we have an equivalent that can be heard in Russian? It's a pretty expensive proposition. RT's coverage of this was that John Kerry again stressed that RT's influence is growing worldwide.

And then what happens is the other Russian media outlets pick up on the RT story and they create kind of an echo chamber. So the story keeps going around and around with little things being added into it. So it starts with a kernel of truth, distorts initially, and then builds an echo chamber around that. Sputnik is what used to be the voice of Russia. And it is evolving now into an international media organization. I point it out specifically because they have a very heavy play in the languages of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They're emphasizing very heavily a buildup in the former Yugoslavia, for instance. So that would be directly competitive with much of what the Broadcasting Board of Governors, VOA, and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty services do in those parts of the world. And the last one you may not have heard of as RUPPLY [ph], which is really effectively a global news feeder information service that acts as kind of a wire agency for television networks around the world based in Berlin and uses really RT content. The reason this is a concern is that they provide this content at very low cost to stations around the world that might not be able to afford big agencies, writers, AP television news. So if you're a television station in Nigeria and you're airing coverage of what's happened in Ferguson, there's a very good chance that you're going to be airing RUPPLY's coverage. So you're going to be getting the Russian version in Nigeria of events in Ferguson.

We've taken some steps to try to respond to this. And what we've done, Mark mentioned one of them and I'll get to that now right away – just two quick things. There's a recent government hall in Latvia, which as you know just took over the presidency of the EU council that found that ethnic Russians are more supportive of Moscow's position in Ukraine than that of the West. And RT in Britain is the most popular foreign news station, although I think in some ways that's emphasized as still not popular. But it does have higher viewership than CNN in Great Britain. And RT brags about having now more than a billion global YouTube views.

So now, very quickly Commissioners. before we get to Q&A, we're going to show you a little bit about what we have done in response. You've heard mentioned that Current Time program. While Anastasia is pulling that up, let me just say a little bit about Russia.

So with 260 million speakers worldwide, 150 million as first language and a 110 million as second language fluently, Russian is the eighth largest primary language in the world. It rises to fifth when you include people who speak it fluently as a second language. So global media plays in Russian make sense, not just only for the former Soviet space but in fact locally because it is a global language. And US International Broadcasting traditionally did not do Russian language content for countries other than Russia and the Russian federation for historic reasons of not wanting to reinforce in the countries that were incorporated in the Soviet Union the Russian language as the language of Moscow and the empire. So we've had to play catch-up in that area. The key first effort that we've done with support from the State Department is to launch Current Time, last October. This is a nightly 30-minute Russian language television news program that starts like this.

[Video 00:51:03 – 00:51:19]

I'll take the sound down now. We'll just let it go by. This is a co-anchored program. It's also something new for us. It's a joint production of the Voice of America and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty. The program opens in Washington and then kicks over to Prague. And the anchor in Prague, Sergey Dorofeev [ph], you'll see in just a moment. And they bounce back and forth through the program with Prague taking the lead on news of the region itself in developments. And the VOA anchor of course, emphasizing the US perspective on issues and international discussion of the issues. Current time—oh, this is actually not Sergey Dorofeev. This is another anchor in Prague,

who joined RFE/RL recently from BBC. You might be able to pick up that the Prague set is a virtual set. It's not an actual TV studio. And we're working to smooth the graphics and there will be a new graphics package for this program introduced next week. And you can look at it because it's got a good digital presence. And take a look at what it looks like updated.

So Current Time at this point has nationwide coverage in Ukraine, Moldova, Georgia, and Lithuania on multiple outlets. We had an outlet in Latvia that carried the program for just a few weeks and then dropped it. We're looking for another affiliate now in the Latvian market. We're working on Estonia and delivering to Belarus through satellite. It's available digitally, globally, and we are getting reports that people are watching in Russia digitally and also on some cable networks that have spillover into Russia from Ukraine. There's been pretty good feedback on the program so far. We're expanding it. We're going to launch a central Asia version of Current Time in the next couple of months with coverage in the central Asian countries. And we're also looking to expand Current Time by including more content generated from our partner stations in the countries where the program is carried itself.

I'd like to move on quickly to Ukraine. And I don't think we even need to run Studio Washington, necessarily. But indicated by the other guys, there's been a real emphasis on Ukraine. The Voice of America has started Russian language content for Ukraine, a five-minute daily show called Studio Washington. And Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty has launched six television programs for Ukraine. And that's an opportunity to mention that one of these programs is called Schemes. And it's about fighting corruption.

So to Macon's point, we're not only involved in countering Russian propaganda here. We're still deeply involved in our traditional mission of promoting civil society through our content and rule of law. The Ukrainian service program—I guess you can go ahead and run this. This is the opening of the Studio Washington program, which is done out of Washington. Again, with Russian language content for Ukraine, something new for the US.

[Video 00:54:06 – 00:54:28]

I'm going to show you just one more thing before I close here. And that's a special effort that we've done for Crimea. Crimea, which seems a little bit forgotten, of course, with everything that's gone on but again with State Department support last March to Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, launched a website called Crimea Realities in three languages. It's in Russian. It's in Ukraine. And it is in Tatar, which is somewhat symbolic, not very much used in Tatar but the Tatars of course, are a repressed minority population in Crimea since the Russians have annexed the area getting millions of unique visitors each month to these sites from Russia and Ukraine in particular but also from around the world. So a big part of our play is digital. It's not just a television play. But it is definitely digital with an idea of reaching audiences not only in these places, but around the world.

Now I would say finally that we're just working through our operating plan now and our approval of that for fiscal year '15. But we're deeply appreciative that Congress has funded us at a level sufficient for us to ramp up a lot of new stuff through the rest of this fiscal year also for these markets. And we look forward to being able to give you an updated briefing on those later in the year I hope. So again, I think that's enough for an opening. I cut back a little bit to leave the Commission in particular time for questions and discussion. Thank you.

Sim Farar: Thank you, Jeff. I'd like to turn to the Commission Members for any questions they might have. I have a question since I'm somewhat of a Commission Member. My question is to Mark Toner. My question is, you talk about how many people we have on the ground in Ukraine. But can you give me a sense of how big a group of people we have on the ground in the Ukraine now in your division?

Mark Toner: Right, very good question actually. And so, I'm trying to think of exact numbers right now in the Public Affairs Section. And I'm talking Americans, not obviously locally employed staff who are, of course, a vital part of our operations and without whom we couldn't really operate at all. So I'm thinking we have one, two, three, I want to say six currently with TDY support. And we also have plans to plus that up. But, as you know, the bureaucracy doesn't immediately respond so we've got a new, what we call, an FTE – a new slot for another assistant information officer position there. But it's not enough. And frankly, they're running on fumes in a very real way just speaking candidly. We have put out a call and Secretary Stengel has been very kind to plus up our budget so that we can support, as I said, TDY, temporary duty support, for the embassy. And we put out a call for volunteers. And we're now putting in place to help them in the next six to eight months until we get these new full time positions set up. But frankly it's not enough for everything they've got going on.

And just to put it in perspective, it's not just the very real work of working with civil society, working with independent media, working with the government and helping them set-up, but Ukraine is a hot issue right now. And so they are constantly having to—and I'm not trying to downgrade any of this at all -- but they have high level visits almost non-stop whether they're CODELS, whether they're senior US government officials, what have you. And that, as many of you know, requires a tremendous amount of support as well. So it takes—they've been running full stop for a long time now. And you can sense that they probably all need a vacation to be very frank. But as I said, the other thing as Macon pointed out, is the use of social media and even traditional media, electronic media, broadcast media. Ambassador Jeff Pyatt has done tremendous work. And he's out there all the time. And so just providing support for that takes up a lot of manpower. So the quick answer to your question is: we don't have enough people on the ground but we're trying to address that.

Sim Farar: You're doing so much with so little.

Mark Toner: Right. Exactly.

Sim Farar: Very good.

Anne Wedner: I'm just going to jump in there. I think, happily, I was really gratified to see how you had thought about it in a more philosophical way. And when you think about disinformation and the emotional play that the Russian efforts make, it is such a stark contrast to the rationality of our approach in information. And I don't know how much we've thought about how do we win back the emotional space. And further to that point, it's not just the feminization of the west that they're working on to make it “unappealing” and I hate it when things are feminized or made unappealing. But unfortunately I think that the world responds more to macho images in terms of the populations that drive wars and power. And I think that we used to own the masculine place. We had cowboys and Marlboros and blue jeans, and those were masculine images that we projected in the world that unfortunately I think now not just—and I agree with Macon's point – this is not just a Russian issue. This is global. ISIL and other groups also are trying to harness masculine imagery as

a way to promote and to counter and to attack our system. And so when I see the female anchors on our programs I think, great. But then I think maybe we should have male anchors if we're thinking about the ideas that we're trying to capture in a more deep kind of philosophical way. So I just wondered if you guys had a response to that.

Macon Phillips: Sure. Of course. And that's great because I have a response and I'm going to say my piece and then I'm going to jet. [Laughter] We could be here until happy hour and probably make a lot more progress after that because it is a very philosophical and important question. I would start with sort of two ways to think about it. First, who are we trying to reach with that narrative? And to some—for certain audiences if what we're trying to do is correct misinformation in Europe, you may actually find that a female anchor would be more effective. If you're trying to reach a Russian in Russia who's then blasted with this stuff for a long time, yeah, you may need somebody that kind of fits the character they're used to receiving information from more. So it comes back to that audience definition. And it's just so critical. And we think about hundreds of millions of dollars of investments. We tend to think about a 100x increase in audience but that is absolutely the most unsophisticated way to think about it. We need to be thinking about how we actually go deeper with the audience that we care about.

The other piece is—my reaction is what should the State Department do and then what should be done generally? I think in terms of the State Department, we absolutely could get out from behind the podium, get more visuals of our people, try to create opportunities where we are delivering our message in a much more human way than frankly the State Department has historically delivered that. And that's a range from working with the government of the Ukraine to figure out how to do embeds in military actions to making sure that we are elevating the humanitarian work that we're doing and so forth. Absolutely. But the larger question is, when we have a message we want to get out, it is against every value we have where the Under Secretaries pick up the phone and call the head of CNN, NBC, and ABC and say, "Drive that." We don't have summits in L.A. and Hollywood with directors saying we need you to make these people look idiotic. We just don't do that. And that is a—and I'm good with that. I think that's okay that we don't do that. But we have to acknowledge that as a structural disadvantage we have when you want to look at things other than just the truth. The way we work around that, and I would love to hear Jeff's perspective in particular on the BBG side, but I think there is much more opportunity for collaboration with the creative community to give them that guidance without giving them that instruction. But I've got a lot of other things that I've been working on and I think that's an area that we could be exploring more and would love feedback on how best to operationalize that.

Jeffrey Trimble: Thanks. So normally that Current Time program has one male and one female anchor. But I'd like to go a little bit different direction with what you're saying in the macho image. There are a lot of different ways you can respond to what the Russians are doing that does, in fact, take advantage of things that are deeply embedded in our society and that we're very good at. And one of them is satire. The Russians' approach to things doesn't have much of a sense of humor. In many ways, of course, it's profoundly not funny. But when you look at the real success of the day of the show and other kinds of products, these things can work in these markets. And there are elements of satire including short cartoon segments that we're not including the Current Time program and elsewhere. And we're looking at doing more of this kind of programming as part of a comprehensive response. So it's not just straight ahead news and information programming. What else can you do? Could you for that matter do television programming that was reality programming, for instance, that is very entertaining but at the same time deeply into these sorts of issues? And to again go back to Peter Pomerantsev: He has also written some very specific ideas,

because he worked in the Russian television market, about content that could be created with the help of the community here in the United States frankly as part of a comprehensive response that projects our values positively in addition to pushing back on what the Russians are doing.

Anne Wedner: Yeah. I did think the Current Time visuals looked a little bit like The Daily Show actually just the way the globe spun as you got into it. And I agree. I read the Pomerantsev article and I thought it was interesting. It's not necessarily specific. I mean you could sort of turn the weaponization of information onto exactly what we're doing here today. So it's not—we do color even how we talk about what they're doing. But I appreciate that and I do think there is an emotionality that we need to focus more on as Americans because I just don't think we think about it that way consciously.

Sim Farar: Any other questions from the Commissioners...?

Ambassador Lyndon Olson: Yeah. I'm just curious. Estonia, Latvia, and Lithuania, you all alluded to it a while ago. But I think two of those countries have a pretty significant Russian speaking population. And back around 2000 they were pretty volatile. In fact, they were so volatile that I think a couple countries really required the Russian-language—in order to vote you had to be Latvian or Estonian or whatever. Are we intensely involved in communicating with those speakers in those three Baltic countries? Or, do they get their information from outside of their countries?

Mark Toner: I'll take a first swipe at that and then Jeff can elaborate. It's a very good point frankly. Without speaking on their behalf, they need to do perhaps a better job at engaging some of these populations and empowering them and that's really ripe territory frankly for the kind of disinformation that we've seen Russia deploy all over the place. That's what they do. They go in and they show dissent and create anger on behalf of the local population. And best-case scenario, they create a frozen conflict. Worst-case scenario, you have an act of war as you do in eastern Ukraine. So I guess my point here is saying you're absolutely right. It's not just about communications. As any diverse country has to deal with, you have to deal with your minorities. You have to make sure everybody has a stake in the democracy. You have to engage with them. And you have to address their concerns. And that's true for Ukraine and that's true for the Baltics and anyplace else. So that's an absolutely valid point.

In how they're trying to reach them via communications, I think that—and again, Jeff can speak to this as well—but that's where they're coming to us and saying, yeah, we have a Russian language TV station but we frankly haven't put the money into it or the infrastructure for it. We need your help. We need content. We don't have enough to create a 24/7 Russian TV station, Russian-language TV station to help us. And frankly, neither do we. And so—and neither does Europe, and neither does the BBC. So everybody—I've seen lots of people draw analogies to Kosovo where they created this ring around Serbia, which is what it was called at the time. Where everybody, all these national broadcasters basically pooled their resources to create a 24/7 operation that pumped broadcasts or content into this area because separately nobody could do it all in one lift. And I think that's generally the idea. The EU is actually looking at this as well and is a partner with us in looking at the most effective way to do this. But we need to try to pool resources together and, as BBG is already doing, create these content banks and create content that folks can share whether you're in Lithuania or Estonia or wherever.

Jeffrey Trimble: I would just use this as an opportunity to say that we need your help. And we need the help of our colleagues in the administration and we need the help of people who think

about these issues deeply in Congress to help us decide how to best make use of the resources that are available to us in US International Broadcasting. So the traditional model was that as countries developed, anchored themselves in the western institutions, had free elections, developed robust and open media environments, we got out. So in 2004, VOA, RFE/RL ended broadcasting in Lithuania and Estonia and Latvia because those countries joined the EU. They had joined NATO. They had repeated successful democratic elections. We were done. So that's the traditional model. There isn't a place for you any longer in that environment with the possible exception of some VOA content that still is projecting American values and making sure there's an American perspective available to people in countries.

We've had to re-examine that now with what's happened with the Russians. We're not back in Lithuania, Estonia, and Latvia in those languages. If we'd be asked to do so, I suppose we could. But there need to be resources for that. Instead, we've been asked by these governments to focus our efforts and come back in to reach exactly these Russian-speaking populations who are relying on the Kremlin stations for their information. We're happy to do that. But at some point, decisions need to be made. We're in 61 languages globally right now with the budget that we have, which is a big number. It's over 700 million dollars. But that's a lot of languages. And they're worthy. Each of them is being done for a specific reason. But when it comes to really looking at the resource allocation and responding to these new realities, we need to be doing deeper thinking ourselves and, with our colleagues across the communities that are interested in this, think about the best place and most effective way to deploy our resources so quick.

And, just one additional add-on, the weaknesses of this vast Russian disinformation behemoth that we're talking about today is that—and we've heard this from listeners in Moldova and elsewhere – it's all Moscow-centric. The accents are all from Moscow. A frankly useful model to look at to communicate or get information out there is NPR, where they use local affiliates and they feed in stories. And that's a successful way. And that's one of the reasons why we're taking small steps. But one of the models of this Current Time that can help stations with content and get good content out there. But then they can—and this is the model current time – actually put local stories inserted within Current Time. Is that correct?

Mark Toner: Right.

Jeffrey Trimble: You can say it more accurately than I can. But that helps add that local angle that I think is missing in a lot of the Russian or Moscow-generated broadcasts.

Sim Farar: Do any other Commissioners have any questions? We're now going to open it up to the public, if there's anybody out there that has any questions, please feel free. And I just wanted to remind everybody that this Sunday there's a new episode of Kevin Spacey's House of Cards [Laughter] right after this.

Jeffrey Trimble: House of Cards, by the way, is the most downloaded English language television program in the Russian federation. So think about everything that that implies.

Audience Member: I'm Miles Smith, senior program officer from IREX. We're the tip of the sphere for a lot of the policies that you guys are talking about. We run media exchanges where we bring journalists from the Ukraine, entire editorial staffs from Ukrainian media to the United States. We train journalists on how to be safe war correspondents. We run these tech camps for you guys all the time. So obviously we're involved in a lot of this stuff. And I was wondering specifically,

following up to the Pomerantsev article, whether there's been any discussion about partnering with a group like Netflix. I mean the BBC pays for programs to be produced that have a social content that are satire about politics but give an insight into UK politics. Why not partner with Netflix and the BBC and Hollywood to produce programs in Russian for a Russian speaking audience that are interested in the sort of drama content and satire content that they're not getting locally? I was just wondering if there's been any progress or thought about that. And secondly, isn't there already a Russian language 24-hour news channel that's not produced by Moscow with Euro News? I lived in Kyrgyzstan. I've lived in Turkmenistan. I've lived in Russia. You can get your news everywhere. People actually do watch it. I wonder if there's any talk about partnering with them? Now obviously, they're part-owned by the Russian state. I wonder if there's been any talk about how to deal with that issue. But frankly, the content that they put on is a lot of the same content that they put on the English language side of that channel. What they do is they have—they don't actually put people on camera so it's very cheap for them to translate things into local languages. I mean there's a Bulgarian language version of Euro News. And so, I was just wondering if there's any thoughts of that kind of approach, which might be more cost efficient.

Mark Toner: Jeff, just very quickly, yes, we've thought about all that. I'm not saying it's absolutely—we need to do more as I mentioned in terms of harnessing Hollywood, harnessing the best creative talent in California and Silicon Valley. Nobody does this better than the United States. And we've heard this consistently. Part of the problem is money. And we have to be selective and we have to be clever. And we started initial conversations with, for example, PBS and other public broadcasting networks about say really good Frontline documentaries or there's other really high quality stuff. Whether we can get the Russian language rights for that kind of stuff is a question. Nobody's going to give you—Hollywood's not going to give you the Russian language rights for House of Cards because they can make billions from it, which is fine. That's how we work and that's how we function. So there's that hurdle to get over I think. On Euro News I respect your opinion. I always say this seems to me like a network for lonely businessmen sitting in hotel rooms. [Laughter] And it's a little dry in my view. It's a lot of B-Roll footage. And I get that it's actually out there functioning, but I think whatever we undertake, should be something of that magnitude of the Russian language network, if you will. That's got to be a mixture of entertainment, sports, and you have an end use. That's what the Russians do very well. And it works for them.

Jeffrey Trimble: Well, BBC has a great advantage in that it has a huge trove of its own programming, its own version and languages. I work closely with our Persian language broadcasters. And when you're watching BBC Persian in Iran and the Persian news and information programming isn't on, you're watching Top Gear and Dr. Who and Sherlock versioned with Persian. And that's terrific. And it really pulls in the audiences. We at US International Broadcasting don't have that because we're organized differently. Partnerships and seeking content that's being generated by others is important. And again, if anyone can help us more with that, the discussions are certainly underway. It's something that we would appreciate. I'd make a cautionary note on Euro News. I don't watch it in Russian closely, but I hear more and more feedback of concerns about the quality of the translation and what's being said in Russian, and that there are concerns that Russia has been poisoning Euro News. Although I can't personally vouch for that because I'm not watching it closely. But I have heard that from others. I mean you all have. I see Larry nodding his head about that.

Sim Farar: Any other questions from the audience please?

Audience Member: Yeah, Mike Anderson, retired Foreign Service Officer. This is for Mark Toner, if you could address this. I believe you mentioned that you're really trying to empower the field, people that have languages to speak up and be sources of credible policy information. Could you say a little more about that? How do you encourage people to take risks? Are there a lot of examples of people that have said things and their careers have suffered? And also there's so much reliance on the State Department briefing. Everything is on that. And it's really hard I think for the field to speak up and feel free to do so. So how are you addressing that issue?

Mark Toner: Those are all very good questions and I'm intimate with the process having been the deputy spokesman. And also there hasn't been an IO, a press officer, in the field. So one of the ways we try to combat this—and as I said, the PA bureau, or public affairs bureau, has already developed an effective model. So we have a hub in Dubai that's an Arabic media hub. And we trained up spokespeople in Arabic, gave them a lot of on-camera media training. And as many of you probably know in this room, it is hard to do media, hard enough in English. It's harder, much harder, in a foreign language. And you know there have been moments along the way where we've had spokespeople get out there, maybe misstate something. You've got to have their backs. I absolutely agree with you. And it hasn't always been that way. And that's a challenge to overcome. I would say that one of the good things about USIA being brought into the State Department is that there's much more of an awareness now, especially among newer Foreign Service Officers, that they've got to do public diplomacy, that they've got to get out there, they've got to do media. It's just a part of what their job description is now whether you're a political officer or whether you're an information officer. I hate to put it so callously but you've got to check that box. But they also—I think there's a deeper understanding that it's not just about demarches, and back talks with your counterparts in the host governments, but it's also about getting out and talking to people and having people to people contact.

So I think there's a bit of a sea change there in the mentality. And it's a mixed bag. In terms of social media we've got ambassadors who are just incredibly engaged. Steve Mull in Warsaw, I don't know how the man does it. I mean he's on Twitter late into the night answering every question that comes to him in Polish. He's super engaged, super energized about it, and does a terrific job. You've got to be disciplined about it obviously but you've got to be able to get out there and engage. So what we just most recently did with PA is that we tried to take that Arabic model and apply it to the Russian speaking world. And we brought it to seven to 10 Russian speakers into London. We brought in our media trainers and they did four or five days of intensive training. Assistant Secretary Tory Nuland did a CVTS with them where she talked about the need to get out there and her own career, what she's done. We just drove home the fact that you need to be out there, we need voices out there. And we also had our IO in from Moscow, Will Stephens, whose been instrumental both back here and in Moscow in our efforts, drive home the fact that it is about Ukraine but it's not just about Ukraine. You need to speak about Ebola and about ISIL in Syria and all the other pieces of the puzzle.

And we've tried to give them the tools. We do quick talking points now. Here it is in Russian, all 15 – 20 pages of it. We try to pull out quick excerpts and turn them around in a couple hours time that they can go out to that same media, the same timeframe and get out there and get their voices heard. But it's a learning curve and it's a process that we need to air out more. We're taking a shot at it. And Jen Psaki, for example, who's the spokesperson, has done TV Rain, which is one of the few quasi-independent voices left in Russia. So she's showing a willingness to get out there and engage on that. And others have all been out there and they do Russian media as part of their regular interaction. So it's gotten better.

Sim Farar: Other questions?

Audience Member: I wondered what efforts are being made by us or by others to evaluate the effectiveness of the Russian propaganda? I mean not just the input they're putting in, not just how glossy some of it is. You've referred to the fact that it's too Moscow-centric for some markets. We talked a whole lot about this one articles as if it's the end all, be all. And I just wondered how much effort there is to see what bang they're getting for their buck?

Mark Toner: Yeah. And I'll just speak to this, but Macon also addressed this in his opening remarks. We're not great at audience analysis. From a marketing perspective we need to look at that. And it has to be a much bigger focus. We do a lot of polling, as you probably know. We look at polls like Lavata in Moscow and in Russia and other polling that's done. And we do our own polling that gives us a sense of what messages are playing where. We do a lot of—through our embassy in Moscow and others – monitoring of the Russian media and trying to pick up on where the messages are coming out of as an indicator of what the Kremlin is selling that week in terms of disinformation. But we need to a much better job at it. We'll have a meeting where we'll all realize we're just giving anecdotal evidence. Macon said it best, that we're putting millions of dollars into an effort without really solidly knowing what the audience is. And so we need to do a better job at that. We're trying to actually mount that effort in all of our periphery countries. Sometimes our embassies are really good sources of information on that. And to an extent they say they can get some of that data for us. But like I said, we need a much deeper guide to audiences, I would say.

Jeffrey Trimble: We traditionally do audience research in the countries where we operate. We'd like to be able to do it more often. So we're finding ourselves having to rely on polls. I cited one done by the government of Latvia about attitudes towards the situation in the Ukraine among Russian speakers. So we're scooping up whatever's available to us in the markets out there. We're following what's coming back from the posts who have their ear to the ground, including about research from Russia. So you still have the Balata Center doing incredible, social research in Russia. I'm not sure how much longer that lasts, but we follow it all very closely.

Ambassador Lyndon Olson: Mr. Chairman, Katherine, I know we're trying to stick to an 11:30 timeframe, but there are about five or six hands that went up out there and I'd be interested to see what we've stirred up, if that's okay with you, to answer it. We don't have to go until 5:00. I'm just saying that there's three or four people that consistently raise their hand and I'd like to hear what they have to say.

Sim Farar: Do you have a little extra time?

Mark Toner: Sure.

Sim Farar: ...just a few more minutes.

Mark Toner: No worries.

Audience Member: You alluded briefly to working with Europe on this. I'm curious about that. Obviously, for Europe this is far more important. This is a semi existential threat. A number of other countries border along Russia and Ukraine. They should be spending far, far more on this than we are. And I'm guessing they probably don't. And having worked closely with the EU, I know

how hard it is to get the EU to organize itself for things like this. Do we have a platform that, at a sufficiently high level, can raise the political importance of it? And my second question is, we're not going to be allowed to reach the Russian audience in any sizable way. We spend a lot of money on TV in Russia. I know, I've worked there. Wouldn't we be better off for the time being in focusing that money on the populations in the neighboring states where we have a fighting chance of countering what the Russians are doing?

Mark Toner: Both are very good questions. So I'll start with Europe. Yes. I do think we've got Europe's attention at a sufficiently high level. And I don't want to disparage the EU because I have some really good counterparts there who are super engaged on this and understand the seriousness of it and the urgency of it. But as you well know having served there, it is a huge bureaucracy with many moving parts. It's a multilateral organization that has all these different countries in it. And so for it to speak with one voice takes some effort. And so that's been a frustrating aspect. And as you correctly pointed out, and I've heard this from British colleagues and others, is that this really the impetus for what happened in Ukraine was about it trying to get those first initial steps towards a European future and pursue at least the beginnings of a membership in the EU. And I think that the EU has done a mediocre job at messaging and trying to get itself out there and present itself and push back on all those fronts for a lot of different reasons. But largely, I would just say this is a capacity issue. They don't have the focus on this solely and a lot of it is just managing many members with different perspectives on this. It's been a constant struggle frankly to keep a unified front on sanctions and in many ways Putin and Russia is continuing transgressions and the MA17 shoot down did more to solidify public opinion of Western Europe than any messaging that we did. But it is extremely important. And we have to always tend to that garden, if you will, and we always have to tend to those relationships and keep people on board.

And you can see it. I'll just give you an example, a quick example of where we started to pick up from disparate corners where we hear about, oh you know, my contacts here in Milan were telling me about the fact that they were hearing that US/Russian trade actually picked up despite sanctions in the past year while EU has suffered. And then at the Munich security conference, oh, there's somebody else: Yeah, gosh. I went through this session and they were saying that—we were like what. And we're kind of scratching our heads about this. And of course, we looked at it and there was a small kernel of truth to that where there was a Boeing deal that went through. It was already in the pipeline and it was for planes and they're expensive. And so there was a small temporary spike, but you could see where Russia took that and put that out in various spheres or whatever and it was percolating among public opinion and in Europe. And so we very quickly put together rebuttal points and put them out to diffuse both publicly and privately where we could. And we had to turn around quickly and do that. So we need to be responsive. But the answer is to the EU is that they need to be doing more. They're aware. They're part of our disparate Ukraine group that we've got. But we were just talking to a senior British diplomat the other day about this very point, which is that they're under resourced and they need to be better resourced.

On Russia, a very good point and a valid one. And yet as I tried to say earlier, I don't think we can simply disregard it. I recognize that a lot of our efforts there are probably futile. But I don't feel like we can simply give up on the generation of Russians coming up. And I think we have a great ambassador out there doing a wonderful job at soft power diplomacy, where he's not out there necessarily wagging the figure every day. Sure, he gets tough love when he needs to but he's also—he's doing engagement. He's going out and speaking to small town groups. He's doing all that stuff. Sometimes he gets a lot of pushback but a lot of times he doesn't. And so there's enough of a flame there I think that we got to keep engaged on that point.

Jeffrey Trimble: We have virtually no access through conventional media, through traditional media to audiences in Russia. In 2005, the Voice of America had a network and I'd like to acknowledge David Jackson former VOA director who's here today. In 2005, the Voice of America had television stations in Russia and Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty had about three dozen FM stations carrying content. Today there are no radio stations carrying the content. There's one very thin relationship with the Russian business channel whereby Voice of America does daily reports. But for the most part they are financial reports, market reports, and a little bit of back and forth as needed, but we do not have access to that market. We have digital access. That could end at any time. Plus, it could very easily close the door and lead to the blockage of our website in which case we'd be back to the same kind of cat and mouse game that we had to play all through the Cold War and look for ways to get our information into the denied environments. Which is something, sadly, with which we have a lot of experience.

Audience Member: I'm Don Bishop. I'm with the Foreign Service Association and Public Diplomacy Council. Great initiatives, and we've heard a lot of great initiatives that often founder on very small things. And so this is for the Commissioners. As you go out to embassies and talk to people in the field – it was the comment about getting extra Foreign Service people to the Ukraine that made me think of this. Six is clearly an adequate number, but the lag and the inertia of the personnel system is keeping more people from being there more rapidly when we need them not tomorrow, we need them now. So there are a lot of things. And when you are at embassies, ask about this. For instance, travel money. There was a large network of American corners in the Ukraine before any of the crisis began. But for a year, nobody had had travel money to be able to visit any of them. With grants – every inspection report by the Office of the Inspector General falls to the embassies for their administration in France. More money pours in by grants because that's a flexible tool, but with no extra people to manage them properly, to properly spend the taxpayers' money. And then just a small thing, representation money. You have to be able to take people out to lunch, have the occasional reception. Of course, that's micro managed by Congress. But some of the sums that are given to Public Affairs Officers in foreign countries are pathetic and laughable. And so there can be all kinds of great ideas and great programs, great initiatives, and then people are paying out of their pocket for a lunch. And it's impossible to do something larger. So ask in detail about these kinds of things so that you can make the bureaucracy here in Washington more responsive. The idea that it takes a long time to get an extra person is so unresponsive.

Ambassador Lyndon Olson: I have a dear friend named Bobby who worked in intelligence. And Bobby and I were having lunch one day and we were talking about what the hell went wrong and who was surprised. But he said our human intelligence just evaporated. And he was very precise. He said there was a time when it was working. I served four years in embassy. My PAO didn't really have resources. He'd borrow from Defense. He'd borrow from others. But without all of those tools that you're talking about that creates that human intelligence and accentuates it and gives cover for it, and it does all these things whether it's a soiree with a controlled invitation list. And I'm told from different PAOs that it really hasn't changed much. In terms of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, I would think we would be in those places because there's no force on the ground. But I would think if you were to at least stabilize those countries enough to have an excuse to go protect the ethnic populations, you'd do it by language and communication. So man, I'd put a lot more money into public diplomacy. But it's not there and you got to realize what happens if it isn't.

Mark Toner: The only other thing I would add to that is you're absolutely right in the sense that we've also let that skill set, that Cold War skill set, atrophy. We were looking in post-9/11 to other

regions of the world. There's other challenges. And frankly, while we were doing that, Russia and the Kremlin very methodically was focused on one thing alone. And that was exerting their power within the periphery. And we took our eyes off the ball.

Audience Member: Good afternoon. I might just change the theme a bit. I was wondering if either of you remember an incident that happened about four or five years ago in Seattle and China. It was our incoming Ambassador Gary Locke going to China. And on his way, someone snapped a photo of him ordering his very own Starbucks. And when he arrived in Beijing, he was carrying his bag. And shortly thereafter, his wife did the same. I wondering if somebody ginned this up, some creative genius somewhere did this. But as I was looking at it, it seemed to me that with that simple act and with no money spent, we did far more presenting the issues that faced China – corruption, the abuse of power by local officials – with just those two photos. Because as you know, Chinese officials going down to the provincial level dare not do any of that sort of stuff. They had legions to carry their bags.

And so what does this have to do with what you've come to discuss? It seems to me why don't we focus some of our programming on what succeeds for Russians who are in the United States? For example, what can they do here? They're in a university. They can conduct research unfettered and well, which they cannot probably do in Russia. They can get a drivers license without a bribe. They can go into business and do pretty well and they don't have to be geniuses. And more importantly, the Russian mafia—the mafia is prosecuted here. They're sent to prison. They're investigated. They're ratted out. On the other hand, in Russia the Russian mafia runs things. They call the shots. They've got Putin as one of them. I mean I'm just wondering why our programming doesn't focus on that stuff. And I'm not being critical. Remember, I understand the tremendous pressure on you guys. I was one of you. I still am sort of. And I see Putin, if you can believe the polling, apparently his approval rating is 86 percent in an independent poll, which given the fact that the economy there is tanking, that suggests his guys are doing something right. It's just a suggestion.

Unidentified Audience Member: That's a good one.

Ambassador Lyndon Olson: I think we're going to have to cut it off. And for anybody that didn't get to ask a question, we'll be here. I want to thank again Mark and Macon and Jeffrey for taking the time to be with us today, for sharing their work on public diplomacy and international broadcasting efforts in the region. We're also grateful for the participation of you all in the audience.

2015 continues to be very busy for this Commission. We continue to focus our efforts on measurement and evaluation of public diplomacy and international broadcasting activities, in addition to engaging foreign publics in high threat environments, and on how we recruit, select and train public diplomacy officers. As Chairman Hybl said, the 2015 edition of the Comprehensive Annual Report will be released September 22nd. We're also very happy to be working on the follow-up to the commission's 2008 report, Getting the People Part rRght, which looks at the human resources dimension of public diplomacy. We again thank Ambassador Larry Wohlers for taking the time to help us with this much-needed update to the 2008 report. We remain open to the importance of research and discussions on certain topics that may be of importance to all of you. So stay in touch with us. We have another meeting in May.

Thank you for coming and weathering this terrible storm.

[Applause]